



R

# Montgomery County Council

*For Immediate Release*

October 8, 2012

Contact: 240-777-7960

## **Montgomery Councilmember Valerie Ervin To Announce Initiative to Combat Hunger**

*On Tuesday, Oct. 9, in Rockville, She Will Detail Plans  
to Form Food Recovery Effort in the County*

N  
E  
W  
S  
  
R  
E  
L  
E  
A  
S  
E

ROCKVILLE, Md., Oct. 8, 2012—Montgomery County Councilmember Valerie Ervin at 12:30 p.m. on Tuesday, Oct. 9, will hold a news conference in Rockville to highlight a new initiative focused on creating a food recovery effort in the County. Representatives from the University of Maryland's Food Recovery Network, Share Our Strength, the Department of Health and Human Services and the Maryland Restaurant Association, as well as representatives from faith-based institutions who serve the hungry, are expected to attend and discuss how this effort can help provide low-income residents with assistance and bolster non-profit community partners.

The news conference will be held in the Third Floor Conference Room of the Council Office Building at 100 Maryland Ave. in Rockville.

Food insecurity is a nationwide challenge. The Capital Area Food Bank reports that 40 percent of its clients in the Washington area must choose between food and other necessities like housing, utilities, medical care and transportation.

Councilmember Ervin participated in a food security panel in Takoma Park and was motivated to start a food recovery effort in Montgomery County when she saw the work that student volunteers were doing at the University of Maryland. Ben Simon and Mia Zavalij created a successful model of food redistribution called the Food Recovery Network at the College Park campus. The group collects food which would otherwise be wasted because it was unused by food services in cafeterias, from sporting events and special events (such as alumni gatherings). The Food Recovery Network then redistributes it to those in need.

As of May 2012, the organization donated more than 30,000 meals from the University of Maryland. After starting three other chapters at colleges across the United States, the organization is becoming a 501(c)(3) nonprofit with the mission of replicating the model in other communities.

“When I saw what an amazing job the students at University of Maryland were doing, I thought why aren’t we doing this in Montgomery County,” said Councilmember Ervin, who represents the eastern portion of the county and chairs the Council’s Education Committee. “Hunger is an ever-increasing problem in our County. Low-income children are often at the greatest risk for food insecurity, which has a dramatic impact on student achievement.”

The Food Recovery Network has already gained recognition, winning Kevin Bacon and the University of Maryland’s “Do Good Challenge” in April and the Consumer Bankers Association “Banking on Youth” competition in July.

Simon of the Food Recovery Network is pleased that Councilmember Ervin is championing the expansion of food recovery.

“She has the right connections and the right vision, and our hope is that the model we develop can be replicated in other counties in Maryland and beyond,” he said.

In Montgomery County, the current economic crisis has forced more people than ever to ask for public assistance. In 2012, the self-sufficiency standard, which is the minimum income families require to achieve financial security, for a family of four in the County is approximately \$82,877.

Approximately one-third of Montgomery County students qualify for Free and Reduced Meals (FARMs), a poverty indicator and a figure that may be higher due to underreporting.

Many cities have food recovery programs, such as those sponsored by the D.C. Central Kitchen in Washington, D.C., and City Harvest in New York City. In Montgomery County, the Manna Food Center is the main food bank and nearly every non-profit organization that deals with food insecurity issues relies on Manna to provide food for their clients.

A new food recovery program in Montgomery County would enhance existing resources for Manna and other non-profit groups.

There is also an environmental component to this initiative. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, in 2010, more than 34 million tons of food waste was generated in the United States. In 2011, 19 percent of Montgomery County’s waste stream was made up of food.

“The food recovery initiative will not only help our area non-profit organizations who fight hunger, but should also reduce the amount of food that ends up in our waste stream,” said Councilmember Ervin. “In my mind, this initiative is a win-win as those who donate food receive tax benefits and those in need receive healthy meals.”

Minerva Delgado, executive director of the Manna Food Center, strongly endorses the creation of a food recovery program in the County.

“Given the continuing demand for food at Manna Food Center, a key to our future success is finding new sources of food donations,” she said. “This initiative is an important step in that direction.”

Manna distributed approximately 3.5 million pounds of food to 115,000 individuals in Fiscal Year 12. The number of individuals seeking assistance continues to grow, with an increase in those served of more than 200 percent since FY04.

Another group that backs Councilmember Ervin's initiative is the No Kid Hungry campaign.

"Over the last few years, we have seen a rising number of Montgomery County residents without reliable access to adequate nutrition, including many children who do not know where their next meal will come from," said Anne Sheridan, director of the Maryland No Kid Hungry campaign. "The Food Recovery initiative is another example of Councilwoman Ervin's leadership of our community's response to hunger and will serve to improve the county's safety net for those who need it most."

The United Christian Life Center of Riverdale receives donations from the Food Recovery Network and distributes meals to hungry families.

"There is not a food a food shortage problem in our nation, but simply a food distribution problem," said Pastor Ben Slye of the United Christian Life Center, "and the Food Recovery Network addresses that problem."

Creating a Council Implementation Work Group is necessary to evaluate the costs associated with creating a food recovery program and to develop a strategic action plan for implementation. This group will evaluate best practices, map existing resources, identify ways to enhance communication among non-profit organizations, service providers and food suppliers, and recommend needed legislative changes to assist in these efforts.

The work group must submit its interim report to the Council by March 31, 2013, and a final report by July 1, 2013.

A report on the University of Maryland's Food Recovery Program was recently produced by County Cable Montgomery (CCM), the County government's public broadcast channel. The report can be viewed via YouTube at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJ1iX1KzFTA&feature=youtu.be>

####